



the Quail

Mount Diablo Audubon Society

P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php

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June 2006

Birds of New Zealand and the Subantarctic Islands • Scott Hein



Royal Penguin

Stretching to the south and east of mainland New Zealand is a ring of small subantarctic islands. These relatively unknown islands have been called the “Galapagos of Antarctica” and are home to unbelievable numbers of nesting seabirds and marine mammals. Join Scott and Claudia Hein aboard the “Spirit of Enderby,” a small (48 passenger) Russian polar research ship exploring these subantarctic islands on an 18-day voyage they took last December.

The Enderby made a 2382 nautical mile loop that started and ended in Dunedin on the South Island of New Zealand. Along the way eight different subantarctic islands, each with its own unique flora and fauna, were visited. These beautiful and diverse islands host many rare and endemic penguins, seabirds, and marine mammals along with the beautiful and unusual “Megaherb” habitat.

After leaving Dunedin no other ship was sighted until reaching the Chatham Is-

lands near the end of the trip. In addition, other than an Australian research base on Macquarie Island and small settlements on the Chatham Islands, most of the islands were uninhabited. This is a truly remote part of the world that few have the privilege to visit.

The Southern Ocean, notorious for its high winds, bad weather, and enormous seas, took it easy on the passengers. In fact, the worst weather was upon returning to San Francisco on New Years Eve! The seas on the 2½ day trip from the Chatham Islands back to Dunedin on the “Chatham Rise” were particularly calm with just enough wind to keep the seabirds in the air.

The birding ranged from merely outstanding to mind-blowing, culminating on Christmas day when 31 tubenoses, including half the world’s albatross species, were seen! In addition to this extravaganza, there were eight species of

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A Bold New Vision

A Grand Public Park Like Golden Gate Park for the Concord Naval Weapons Station

At the April Board of Directors meeting, our Board decided to take a firm stand on a critical issue facing Concord and Contra Costa County. Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be leading the effort to save the vast public lands occupied by the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

With the closure of the Navy base, the future use of those public lands is hotly contested. Many folks want to see vast residential and commercial development. We disagree. Our Board wants to see those lands preserved as open space and the creation of a park that will rival Golden Gate Park.

Nearly 140 years ago, community leaders in San Francisco, out of concern that future families would one day feel overcrowded, came together to create one of the greatest parks in the world – Golden Gate Park, which is home to more than

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Potluck Dinner

The next general meeting of Mount Diablo Audubon Society will be **Thursday, June 1**, in the Camellia Room of The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. (Map, page 7.)

6:30 PM Doors open

7:00 PM Dinner is served!

8:05 PM Program

Please bring a salad, entree, or dessert to serve 10. Mark your serving plates. Paper plates will be available, but bring your own cups and flatware. Tea, coffee and punch will be provided. Bring your own wine if you wish.

[Former] President's Letter

For about the last few years I have had the pleasure of serving as president of Mount Diablo Audubon Society. It has been a lot of fun and also has provided a deep sense of satisfaction. If I had to pick out one thing I am most proud of, it would be the restructuring of the chapter from bylaws to chapter own membership to the great improvement in our financial status.

Many of your board members have contributed to these huge endeavors over the last 4-5 years and I thank them all. I welcome Jimm Edgar as the new president. Perhaps I should say returning president as he served in that position 20+ years ago. I will continue to serve the chapter as vice president, so I am not going away. However, some of our former board members are leaving the board. Elizabeth Dickey has served in many positions over the years, and I thank her for all her efforts. Joel Summerhill and Gloria Cannon are moving back east. Joe Frank has already moved to near Yosemite where he will be active in the local Audubon chapter.

On behalf of the chapter I thank all four of these dedicated volunteers. I received a huge amount of help from too many people to be able to mention them all. So all I will thank is my wife Cecil for all her help and support. *Mike Williams*

Scott Hein *Continued from page 1*

penguin and many other surprises ranging from Red-crowned Parakeets to the reclusive Chatham Gerygone. Scott's presentation will feature photographs of many of these amazing birds in their native habitat.

Scott and Claudia Hein are MDAS members who have previously presented programs on the Galapagos Islands, Antarctica, and Alaska. Scott specializes in photography of the native plants, wildlife, and landscapes of the West. His images have appeared in many local and regional publications including Bay Nature, Diablo Magazine, Black Diamond Living Magazine, and Outdoor California. You can preview some of Scott's images on his web site: <http://www.heinphoto.com>.

A Bold New Vision

Continued from Page 1



Tule Elk at Concord Naval Weapons Station. California DFG photo.

one million trees and 120 bird species. 75,000 people visit it on an average weekend.

The community leaders of the East Bay, after seeing the Golden Gate Park success, took a similar bold step 65 years ago by making public watershed lands in the Oakland and Berkeley hills into the beautiful chain of regional parks that we enjoy today.

The Board of Mount Diablo Audubon Society believes that now is the time for our generation's community leaders to take the same bold and inspired steps that community leaders in San Francisco and the East Bay took so long ago. The City of Concord, and all of the Central Contra Costa County's political and community leaders should come together in support of an alternative General Plan for Concord, including Contra Costa County's version of Golden Gate Park.

This beautiful park would be a short hop for local citizens and would open up a vast open area for active and passive enjoyment. With the North Concord BART Station as a staging point, citizens from throughout the region could come to Concord's signature park.

We are calling on the community leaders of Concord and elsewhere to secure a better quality of life for the current and future citizens of Contra Costa County. We do not think 50,000 more people and the associated traffic problems in Concord are good for anyone.

We consider the future use of the public lands currently used by the Navy as one of the most important conservation and quality of life decisions to be grappled with in this valley in the last 10 years, and perhaps for the next 30 years.

Our Chapter's effort began in April with a detailed response to the pending Concord City Plan, in which we put forward the Board's vision. Members of the Chapter are attending public meetings about the Weapons Station, and we are meeting with local conservation groups to rally support. Kent Fickett, John Leggett, and others have been spearheading this effort.

Please visit the website to learn more about this issue. You can download our response to Concord's City Plan, a letter we have mailed to our Chapter's Concord residents, and a pending Op Ed piece for the Contra Costa Times. The website explains how you can get involved.

Whether or not you agree with the Board's position, we encourage you to have your own voice heard. It is a seminal, generational issue for our County. Contact information for important local decision makers is listed on the website, along with helpful guidance for writing good advocacy letters.

The Contra Costa Times accepts Letters to the Editor at this eMail address: letters@cctimes.com

We hope that our membership will consider this important issue very carefully.

Jimm Edgar, Mike Williams

NEWS FROM WILD BIRDS UNLIMITED



Birdseed and Suet Sale!
June 6–25

Native Bird Connections
will be presenting programs
with live birds on June 10.

Birdfeeding tips:

- Change the nectar in hummingbird and oriole feeders every 3–5 days to prevent mold. Make 2–3 quarts of nectar at one time. Rinse out and refill your feeders every 3–5 days. Keep the rest of the nectar in the refrigerator. You will then have minimal problems with mold. A ratio of 5 parts water to one part sugar is suitable if you are feeding both species. If you are only feeding hummers, you can use a 4:1 ratio.
- Please report all oriole and grosbeak sightings as we are tracking them.
- Last year Lesser Goldfinches continued to visit feeders throughout the summer. Keep those thistle feeders full.

We are receiving reports of Hooded and Bullock's Orioles visiting nectar feeders in Contra Costa County. Most of the sightings have been males, with only a few females being seen. The Hooded nest primarily in fan palm trees, while the Bullock's like to make their nests at the end of limbs. Please report all sights to (925) 798-0303.



Black-headed Grosbeaks seem to also be plentiful this year. Both males and females are being seen at backyard feeders.

Their favorite food is sunflower seeds. Also, please report sightings to us. We map the oriole and grosbeak sightings.

Mike & Cecil Williams
Wild Birds Unlimited
692 Contra Costa Blvd.
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
925-798-0303

Visit us at www.wbupleasanthill.com

Quickies

Weekend Birding in California

Midpeninsula Open Space



Alpine Pond

The 25 preserves of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District stretch from Pulgas Ridge near San Carlos in the north to Sierra Azul overlooking the town of Los Gatos. This greenbelt of parks, mostly accessible from Skyline Boulevard—like its counterpart, the East Bay Regional Park District—has many locations to satisfy the birder, the naturalist, and the hiker. The Black Mountain Backpack Camp is popular with hikers who wish to go from the valley to the coast. Reservations are required.

Russian Ridge is a great area for wildflowers in the spring, and it is one of the best places in the Bay Area to see raptors. Red-tail Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Golden Eagles, and Turkey Vultures soar overhead in search of food. On the steep grasslands, coyotes and an occasional mountain lion also search for prey.

Skyline Ridge Preserve adjoins Russian Ridge where Skyline Boulevard (Highway 35) intersects with Page Mill and Alpine Roads. Park in the Russian Ridge lot and walk through a tunnel under the roadway to find the David C. Daniels nature center on the shore of Alpine Pond. The center is open on weekends from noon until 5 pm and contains displays with emphasis on the aquatic organisms on the pond. The lake also hosts migrating birds.

A little to the north from these preserves is the Yerba Buena native plant nursery. If you are in the area, stop in and wander the trails. You'll likely spot a number of birds, and you can contemplate how to bring more birds into your own backyard.

Native Plants *Continued from page 8*



ing and nesting, and plants with nectar and berries. Gardening with natives doesn't mean that you have to use native plants exclusively. There are many nonnative Mediterranean plants that are good companions to our native species, and have similar cultural needs.

Native Gardening Resources:

Borenstein, Fross, and O'Brien. *California Native Plants for the Garden*. Cachuma Press, 2005.

Harlow and Jakob. *Wild Lilies, Irises, and Grasses, Gardening with California Monocots*. University of California Press, 2003.

Schmidt. *Growing California Native Plants*. University of California Press, 1980.

Keator. *Native Shrubs of California*. Chronicle Books, 1994.

Ertter. *Annotated Checklist of the East Bay Flora*. CNPS East Bay Chapter with the University and Jepson Herbaria, 1997.

www.BringingBacktheNatives.net. East Bay Native Plant Tour Guide with many gardening articles and resources.

www.nativeplants.org. Friends of the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Berkeley. A great place to see the plants in a garden-like setting. Also classes and plant sales.

www.laspilitas.com. A native plant nursery with resources for growing plants and wildlife uses of plants.

www.treeoflifenuresery.com. A native plant nursery website with similar resources.

Field Trip Schedule

By Hugh Harvey

June

3 Saturday Outer Point Reyes
8 Thursday Annadel State Park
17-18 Saturday/Sunday Yuba Pass

July

29 Saturday San Mateo Coast

August

12 Saturday Bodega Bay

Field trips are open to members and non-members, beginners and masters. Weather or other contingencies may require changes. For updates, read the *Quail*, visit the MDAS website at www.diabloaudubon.com/index/php, or call the Audubon taped recording at (925) 283-8266. Customary carpool expense is 37½ cents per mile, plus tolls and entry fees, shared among driver and riders. Category 1: Easy, little or no walking, smooth paths; Category 2: Moderate, one mile or more, possibly rough terrain; Category 3: Difficult, extensive walking on rough terrain.

Carpool locations: Sun Valley—Southwest corner of the Sun Valley parking lot at Willow Pass Road and Contra Costa Boulevard in Concord. La Gonda—From I-680 southbound, exit on El Pintado, turn right, and right again onto LaGonda. From I-680 northbound, exit at El Cerro Blvd., Danville, turn left, then right on LaGonda, and drive about ¼ mile north to El Pintado. Acalanes—Pleasant Hill Road, just north of SR 24, at the corner of Acalanes Road.

June Field Trips

Saturday, June 3, Outer Point Reyes.

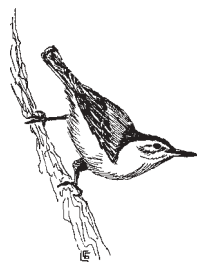
Carpool leaves at 7:30 AM from Acalanes. Meet at Bear Valley Visitor Center at 9:15 AM. Cross the San Rafael Bridge. From I-101 north, take Central San Rafael exit. Go 2 blocks, turn left on 3rd Street, and continue west to Sir Francis Drake Blvd. Turn right on Sir Francis Drake. At SR 1 at Olema, turn right 0.25 mile, then left onto Bear Valley Road. Visitor Center is off Bear Valley. We will carpool from Visitor Center due to limited parking along route. Be prepared for variable weather. Call Hugh Harvey for information, 935-2979. Category 2.

Thursday, June 8, Annadel State Park.

Carpool leaves at 7 AM from Sun Valley; or meet 8:30 AM at parking lot of Annadel Park. Go north on Interstate-680, west on I-780 to Vallejo. Go north on State Route 29 to State Route 121/12. Go left to SR 12, turn right and drive about 17 miles. Turn left onto Los Alamos Road, right on Melite Road, and then left on Montgomery Road for 0.6 mi. Turn left on Channel Drive, 2 mi. to road end. Pileated Woodpecker possible. Leader: Jimm Edgar (510) 658-2330. Category 2.

Saturday and Sunday, June 17-18. Yuba Pass.

This always productive and well-favored weekend trip to the northern Sierra will again be led by Hugh Harvey, (925) 935-2979. Trip requires driving and walking, some of it over



rough terrain. Last year the group saw 130 species, including Black-backed Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker. Saturday we will bird in the Sierra Valley for basin birds. Sunday we will be birding in the Yuba Pass area for mountain birds. Meet at the top of the pass at 7 AM Saturday morning. Make motel reservations now. Closest motels are in Sierra City 18 miles down Highway 49. Herrington's Sierra Pines, (530-862-1151) is one of the best; Buckhorn Lodge (800-991-1170) has new cabins; Golden West Saloon Restaurant and Motel in Loyalton (530-993-4467). There are campgrounds at Chapman Creek and Yuba Pass. Other accommodations, including some campgrounds, are listed at www.sierracity.com/Stay/LodgingCamp.html. San Francisco State University maintains its Sierra Nevada campus six miles above Sierra City on Highway 49. They have a useful web link to accommodations in the area at www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/accom.htm. In the middle of the Sierra Valley near Loyalton, the T Lazy R Ranch is a working cattle ranch with a guest house for rent. Owner Tim Rees can be reached for reservations at 530-993-1560.

Call Wild Birds Unlimited during the week of June 11 for confirmation of trip information (925-798-0303).



These birds do not live up to their name. One will occasionally dine on a cottontail rabbit—larger than itself—should one hop beneath his perch, as he waits for his prey to come to him. This bird is mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible (Isaiah 34:14) as the transfiguration of the Sumerian demon Lilith.

Unscramble these letters, or turn to page 6 for the answer.

CCEEEHNLNORRSSTWW

Trip Reports

April 26, Del Puerto Canyon. It was a glorious day for 15 birders who tallied 73 species. Along Del Puerto Canyon Road we heard a Grasshopper Sparrow, saw three Golden Eagles (one being harassed by three Red-tails), a brilliant male Costa's Hummingbird, two Greater Roadrunners, Rock, Canyon and House Wrens, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Vesper Sparrow. In Raines Park were a nesting female Phainopepla and several Lawrence's Goldfinches. Bluebirds and a Chipping Sparrow were at the Junction, three Lawrence's Goldfinches at the nearby fire station. On San Antonio Valley Road 5-6 Lewis's Woodpeckers were at the usual place, a pair of Wood Ducks at the marshy pond farther south. A singing male Lazuli Bunting was seen by four of us on the way down Mines Road. *Jean Richmond*

April 29, Mines Road. What started out as a cool, overcast day blossomed into a warm, sunny day before we reached the Junction, some 30 miles out Mines Road. Seven members and a guest met at Murietta's Well before continuing to Del Valle Reservoir where we found Caspian Terns, a Spotted Sandpiper, baby Western Grebes on mom's back and an adult Bald Eagle flying the length of the reservoir. At several places along Mines Road we searched for the influx of western migrants. We did find Bullock's Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Wilson's Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak and Lazuli Bunting. In the Junction area we were able to find both Lawrence's Goldfinch and Lewis's Woodpecker. Along the way we also found Golden Eagle, Wild Turkey, Band-tailed Pigeon, five

Continued on page 5

Crockett Hills Opens

By Nancy Wenninger



On June 3, the East Bay Regional Park District will celebrate the opening of Crockett Hills Regional Park, a new 1,700-acre open space preserve located adjacent to the town of Crockett in northern Contra Costa County. Ranging in elevation from 150 to 800 feet, the park stretches for nearly two miles north-to-south from the Carquinez Strait to Highway 4.

More than 1,300 acres of the park were purchased by the District in 1994 from A&B Properties, Inc.—formerly the California and Hawaiian Sugar Company (C&H)—to create a permanent greenbelt along Highway 4, Cummings Skyway and Crockett Boulevard.

The park is bisected by Cummings Skyway which follows its highest ridgeline. To the north lie wooded coastal bluffs overlooking the shoreline. To the south lie steep open grasslands forming an interior valley. Along the ridgeline, 360° vistas include views of Mount Diablo, the Delta, San Pablo Bay, Mount Tamalpais, and Briones Regional Park.

Crockett Hills Regional Park includes areas once used by the Carquin, a subgroup of the Ohlone Indians, for hunting and gathering. It was included in an 1842 Mexican land grant to Teodora Soto. In 1865 Judge Joseph Bryant Crockett, acting as a lawyer, settled a case concerning a boundary dispute for Ms. Soto; for his fee, he was given a strip of land one mile long and three miles wide extending along the Carquinez Strait. To protect his ownership from squatters, Crockett invited Thomas Edwards to farm his land. Edwards' barn, milkhouse and corrals still remain on the site at the Crockett Ranch Staging Area.

The park contains a rich mosaic landscape of woodland, grassland and chaparral, supporting diverse plant and animal life. Dense oak/bay woodland occurs in the cooler, moister drainages north of Cummings Skyway. Denizens of this community include Dark-eyed Juncos, American Robins, Northern Orioles, Lazuli Buntings, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Cedar Waxwings, Western Tanagers, Nuttall's and Acorn Woodpeckers, Cooper's Hawk and Great-horned Owl. The park also contains Edwards Creek and Kestrel Creek, along with a number of ponds, seeps and springs which provide food, water, shade and breeding opportunities. The drier slopes support chaparral species: Wrentits and Orange-crowned Warblers, California Quail, and Bewick's Wrens.

Grassland is the predominant natural plant community on the ridges and hills to the south of Cummings Skyway, comprised mostly of non-native annual grasses, and native and non-native herbs. The grasslands support abundant prey for bobcats, gray fox, coyotes and raptors, including Golden Eagles, White-tailed Kites, Red-tailed and Ferruginous Hawks and Short-eared Owls. A variety of other birds forage and/or nest in the grasslands, including Loggerhead Shrikes, Western Meadowlarks, Western Bluebirds, and Lark and Song Sparrows.

Crockett Hills is a park which is still expanding and evolving. New trails and a group camp south of Cummings Skyway are planned for future development. For now, access to trails, picnic tables and restrooms will be available at the Crockett Ranch Staging Area, located near the intersection of Crockett Boulevard and Pomona.

Note: While this is a hilly park, staff reports that the trails are not quite as challenging in their steepness as those at Las Trampas Regional Wilderness.

Welcome New Members

Lesley Benn	Orinda
Will & Catherine Chatfield-Taylor	San Ramon
Ben Crockett	San Ramon
Ronald Hennig	Concord
Nancy McMillen	Danville
Cheryl Nevares	Orinda
Roger Prince	Danville
Noelle Schoellkopf	Danville

Trip Reports *Continued from page 4*

swallow species, California Thrasher, Phainopepla and two Great-tailed Grackles near the reservoir boat ramp. The meadows of Goldfields were spectacular yellow displays. Altogether we heard or saw 77 species. *Hugh Harvey*

May 4, Mitchell Canyon. Fourteen members saw 61 species of birds at Mitchell Canyon on a beautiful spring morning. The wildflowers were good but not great. Highlight birds included:

2 Wild Turkeys displaying; Olive-Sided Flycatcher; Cassin's Vireo well seen and heard; Swainson's Thrush; Yellow, Black-throated Grey, Nashville, Townsend's. Hermit, Wilson's, and Orange-crowned Warblers; Western Tanager; Lazuli Bunting; and Purple Finch.

The next day Denise Wight found a Yellow-breasted Chat just beyond the farthest point of our walk. *Maury Stern*

April Observations By Steve Glover

A flock of 30 American White Pelicans over Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park, on 4/22 provided one of just a handful of sightings for the park (MD).



A single Northern Harrier over Rock City, Mount Diablo State Park on 4/23 was probably a migrant; an Osprey at the same time and place most definitely was (JR). A chick was present in the Golden Eagle nest at Sibley Regional Park on 4/18 (JS). We rarely report raptor nests in these pages but this specific nest site has been well publicized for years.

A group of 12 Black Oystercatchers at the Albany Crescent on 4/23 was an exceptionally high tally for the East Bay (JH). Red-necked Phalaropes were noted widely throughout Northern California this spring but two on 5/3 were noteworthy nonetheless because of their location: the Maricich Lagoons in Briones Regional Park (DV).

It is hoped that a single Least Tern at the Albany Crescent on 4/23 is a sign that

the local nest colony will be occupied again this summer (JH).

Two Western Kingbirds were an unusual find for west county at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline on 4/17 (LL).

A migrant Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at San Pablo Bay Regional Shoreline on 4/19 was an interesting find for west county (LL).

At least 8 Swainson's Thrushes in Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park on 4/29 was a nice tally (LL).

A pair of Western Bluebirds 4/17 at Point Pinole Regional Shoreline represented a rare record for west county. They were not believed to be present there during the breeding bird atlas project (LL).

A Yellow-breasted Chat in Mitchell Canyon, Mount Diablo State Park, on 5/5 was at a location where they have been found several times in recent springs (DW). Based upon the habitat there, it wouldn't be terribly surprising if they were to remain to nest in the near future.

A White-throated Sparrow, possibly the last to be reported in a bumper-crop of a winter, was at a Moraga feeder 4/13 (EM).

Matthew Dodder, Joel Herr, Laura Look, Ellis Myers, Jennifer Rycenga, Judi Sierra, Doug Vaughn, Denise Wight.

Western Screech Owl *Megascops kennicottii*



Western Screech Owls are crepuscular or nocturnal, cavity-nesting predators. They depend, therefore, on a habitat with dead or dying trees, together with

a plentiful number of small animal prey. Studies have shown that their diet is chiefly mice, rats and other small mammals, but in truth, they'll eat whatever chances by—songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects.

They seem to do as little actual work as they can get by with, as they move into nesting cavities constructed by Northern Flickers, Magpies, or other birds. To hunt, they are opportunistic, and will sit patiently on a tree limb until a tasty morsel approaches in the form of a meadow vole, or perhaps a kangaroo rat. They can be aggressive and powerful, though, and indeed will capture prey that is larger than they are, such as a grouse or Mallard.

Eastern Screech Owls are similar in most ways, but some populations are reddish brown, unlike the always gray

Dow Wetlands



The Community Environmental Faire at the Dow Wetlands Preserve on May 6 was the place to be, especially if you were a child—or had one or two. More than 1,000 visitors enjoyed pontoon boat rides, wildlife track casting, and other family entertainment. Mount Diablo Audubon Society was one of the many exhibitors who shared their interactive displays to bring nature study and ecological concerns to young and old.

The wetlands preserve, just south of Dow Chemical Company's Pittsburg plant, provides a range of habitats and is home to three endangered wildlife species. More than 120 bird species have been recorded. It is a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway migratory bird route that originates in the Arctic. The site was formerly a dump and has now been admirably restored by Dow.

Mount Diablo Audubon members who are to be thanked for their participation in this event include: Cheryl Abel, Alice Holmes, Kathy Kellogg, Diane Maducelli, Brian Murphy, Larry McEwen, Wendy Murphy, Mona and Ed Skoog, and Bob Wisecarver.

Western Screech Owls. They differ in bill color (Western is black; Eastern is pale) and in voice. Neither actually can be said to "screech." Another difference is location, although in parts of Texas the two may both be present.

Owls are able to discern the faintest sound, and to locate its source with remarkable accuracy. First, the shape of the owl's face reflects a sound to the ears, enhancing it. The difference in time when the sound is received by each ear is an indication of lateral direction; and the difference in intensity at each ear is a cue to the vertical angle.

Ornithological Opportunities

Return of the Terns. Sunday, June 18, 10 AM–2:30 PM Crab Cove Visitor Center, 1252 McKay Avenue, Alameda. Join a US Fish and Game wildlife biologist, to view endangered California Least Terns tending their chicks. This bird species travels roughly 2,000 miles from Latin America to nest at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. This population has grown from ten nesting pairs in 1976 to just under 400 in 2004—a fabulous success story. Learn too, how you can protect these extraordinary birds and their habitat. To avoid disturbing the birds, this hour-long adventure takes place aboard a bus which travels to the proposed Alameda Wildlife Refuge (reservations required).

- Bus Tours to view chicks and their parents! 11 AM, noon, and 1 PM. Reserve a one-hour bus trip to visit the nesting site. A wildlife biologist will be aboard the bus to answer questions. Cost: \$3.00. Call (510) 634-1684 to reserve a space. 8+ years please.

- Enjoy a half-hour slide presentation with spectacular images of California Least Terns. 10:30 AM, 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM. No reservation required.

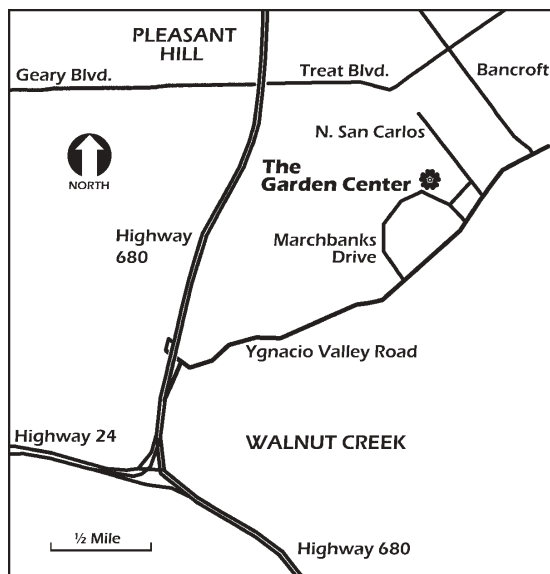
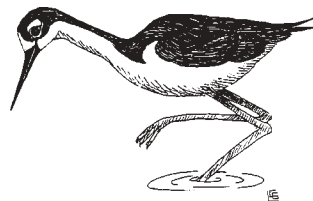
- Related crafts and activities at Crab Cove Visitor Center will be ongoing during the day.

Maine Audubon invites you to attend the second annual “Audubon Leadership Workshop” at the Hog Island Audubon Camp from August 13-19. This session is designed especially for active

Chapter leaders, to build and deepen your expertise and ability to enhance Audubon’s effectiveness at all levels. Led by top-level State and National Audubon program staff and thoroughly experienced Chapter staff and volunteers, participants will enjoy a combination of daily workshops, special presentations, and lively discussions, as well as the traditional Maine field trips, serenity and fine food that are hallmarks of the Hog Island Camp. Daily sessions will include an in-depth focus on key Audubon conservation programs including IBAs, Audubon at Home, education and citizen science, as well as State-Chapter partnership opportunities, fundraising, leadership development and training. Last year’s participants found the camp session provided great information, useful networking, inspiration, and fun!

Session fee per participant: \$700. A special National scholarship of \$200 per person may be available.

For more information: www.maineaudubon.org/explore/camp/hi_adult08132006.shtml or call Maine Audubon’s registrar: Linda Ledoux, toll free at (888) 325-5261 x215.



Mount Diablo Audubon Society meets on the first Thursday of each month, except July and August. Everyone is invited.

Driving directions:

From Walnut Creek, take Ygnacio Valley Road to the signal at Marchbanks Drive. Go left and follow Marchbanks to the Garden Center, opposite the Greenery Restaurant. Turn left into the parking lot.

From Highway 680 south, take Treat Blvd. to Bancroft. Go right to Ygnacio Valley Road, turn right and go one block past signal at N. San Carlos Dr. (Heather Farm entrance). At Marchbanks Drive turn right. The Garden Center is located on the right in the second block.

the Quail

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• a nonprofit organization dedicated to habitat conservation and environmental education •
P.O. Box 53 • Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053
(925) AUD-UBON • (925) 283-8266

Mount Diablo Audubon Society general meetings are on the first Thursday of every month except July and August in the Camellia Room of the Garden Center at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. Board of Directors meets at 7 PM on the second Thursday of every month in the conference room of Wild Birds Unlimited, 692 Contra Costa Boulevard, Pleasant Hill. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Questions about membership or mailing addresses? Call Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, at (925) 968-1677. MDAS membership includes 10 issues of the Quail. A 1-year family membership in MDAS is \$25/year or \$500 for lifetime membership (payable in two \$250 annual payments). National Audubon Society membership includes the Audubon magazine. Introductory 1-year membership is \$20 or \$30 for 2 years; membership renewal is \$35/year. To join MDAS or NAS, send a check payable to MDAS to Ann McGregor, Membership Chair, 400 Oneida Ct., Danville, 94526. SEND ADDRESS CHANGES for both NAS and MDAS to P.O. Box 53, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0053.

MDAS Board of Directors

President: Jimm Edgar, 510-658-2330
Vice President: Mike Williams, 376-1631
Treasurer: Steve Buffi, 938-0929
Board Secretary: Claudia Hein, 671-0401
Sales Manager: Barbara Vaughn, 376-8732
Programs: Alice Holmes, 938-1581
Field Trips: Hugh Harvey, 935-2979
Membership: Ann McGregor, 968-1677
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Ribes sanguineum • Pink-flowered currant
Pat Bacchetti photo

Native Plants for Native Birds

By Pat Bacchetti

Pink-flowering Currant

Ribes sanguineum var. *glutinosum*

One of the best things about living in Northern California, other than the birds, is the wonderful choice of beautiful native plants that we can grow in our gardens. One of the most beautiful is a woodland shrub native to our local hills, the Pink-flowering Currant. Not only does it provide the earliest nectar for hummingbirds, it also produces fruit for the fall birds. It's also easy to grow in the right site.

There are nine species of currants and gooseberries that grow in the hills of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Though several are used in gardens, the Pink-flowering Currant is probably the most available and attractive. In nature, it grows in woodland north-facing

slopes and in canyons with some protection from the sun. In the garden, it likes a protected part of the garden, and is a good plant to use under oaks. It is one of the earliest bloomers, producing cascades of pink flowers from late January to April. The currants in my yard are just losing their flowers now, and have been blooming since late January. Anna's hummingbirds start nesting in January and February, so the abundant blossoms provide a needed source of nectar at a critical time of the year. As the hummers pollinate the tube-shaped flowers, fruit starts to set in March, and will mature by the late summer. Some people make currant jams from the semisweet berries, but you have to beat the birds to get them.

Culture is easy if the plant is in the right place. They prefer a northern exposure with some afternoon sun, or a protected part of the yard. They tolerate pruning, and take no soil amendments, preferring our native clay. Being deciduous, they lose most of their leaves in the winter.

By March, the beautiful lime-green leaves appear to present a contrast to the abundant pink blossoms. Water is necessary for the first two years as the plants get established. Mature plants need little to no water in the summer. When mature, the shrubs can get 6 to 8 feet high and 4 feet wide, providing good shelter for birds in the summer. Good companion plants are Douglas Iris, Coral Bells (*Heuchera*), Ocean Spray (*Holodiscus discolor*), and Virgin's Bower (*Clematis ligusticifolia*), ferns, and grasses. Pink-flowering Currants are available at many of the larger nurseries with native sections, as well as the local botanical gardens and native nurseries.

Using native plants encourages birds and insects to use your garden as a habitat. The plants usually require little care, little water, and no fertilizers or pesticides. You can encourage birds to use your yard by providing a source of water, a variety of plants that bloom at different times of the year, plants of different heights to provide shelter for feed-